

Comparing Luc Rabouin, Soraya Martinez Ferrada, and Craig Sauvé in Montreal's 2025 Mayoral Race

Context: Montreal's 2025 municipal election features three frontrunners vying to replace outgoing Mayor Valérie Plante ¹. Luc Rabouin leads Plante's party, **Projet Montréal**; Soraya Martinez Ferrada heads the main opposition party, **Ensemble Montréal**; and Craig Sauvé spearheads a new third party, **Transition Montréal** ². Each candidate brings a different political pedigree, platform, and network of supporters. Below, we compare their parties' orientations and records, evaluate their campaign promises versus reality, review their personal track records (including any controversies or allegations), examine their ties to interest groups, and assess their overall integrity and capacity to govern.

Luc Rabouin (Projet Montréal)

Projet Montréal's Luc Rabouin (center) at an election press conference alongside party colleagues, October 2025. Rabouin emphasizes continuity with Valérie Plante's progressive agenda while pledging pragmatic solutions within municipal powers. (Image: CityNews)

Party & Ideology: Luc Rabouin is the new leader of **Projet Montréal**, a progressive, environmentalist municipal party that has governed Montreal since 2017 under Mayor Plante ¹. **Projet Montréal** is known for its **urban green agenda** – expanding bike lanes, transit, and affordable housing – and a reformist ethos (it was founded in reaction to past corruption scandals in City Hall). Rabouin himself has been a key figure in this administration as Plateau-Mont-Royal borough mayor (since 2019) and president of the city's executive council responsible for finance and economic development ³. In these roles he has overseen budgets and projects aimed at making Montreal more sustainable and livable. Under **Projet Montréal's** tenure, there have been tangible accomplishments: for example, the city adopted the "20/20/20" inclusionary zoning bylaw in 2018 to require large developments to include social, affordable, and family housing ⁴, expanded protected bike path networks (the **REV** bike express routes), created new parks and protected green spaces, and offered free public transit for seniors and youths. However, the party's record also has shortcomings – notably, the **housing crisis worsened** on their watch (rents rose dramatically citywide ⁵) and some ambitious promises (like Plante's proposed Pink metro line) remained unfulfilled due to funding or jurisdictional limits.

Platform vs. Reality: Rabouin's 2025 platform centers on four priorities: housing & homelessness, accelerating ecological transition, revitalizing the east end, and running a more efficient administration ⁶. He promises "**tangible, concrete solutions**" that the city can implement without waiting on other governments ⁷. Key pledges include "*social pricing*" for public transit (discounted fares for low-income riders), better coordination of road construction to curb delays, a tax on large billboards to fund culture, creating non-market housing so every family can afford a home, and more efficient bus service and green infrastructure ⁸ ⁹. Many of these ideas are popular and within municipal scope – e.g. a discounted transit pass for low-income residents is feasible and mirrors policies elsewhere, and improving coordination of construction sites is a matter of better governance. On housing, Rabouin touts **Projet Montréal's** efforts like the 20/20/20 bylaw, but acknowledges it "**hasn't lived up to its promise**" as many developers simply

paid fines instead of building affordable units ¹⁰ ¹¹ . He proposes simplifying and strengthening that bylaw – making 20% off-market (social) units obligatory in new projects and putting the ~\$58 million in collected fines toward housing ¹¹ . This reflects a pragmatic correction to a policy that under-delivered. Still, Rabouin does *not* advocate turning the city into a housing developer itself, preferring to support non-profit and private builders via zoning and funds ¹² – an approach some housing experts criticize as leaving too much power to developers ¹³ . In sum, Rabouin’s platform largely builds on Projet Montréal’s existing initiatives, aiming to “**go further**” but not radically depart from the past eight years. The challenge is that after two terms, Montreal’s crises (housing affordability, homelessness, infrastructure) remain acute – Rabouin argues factors like provincial rent control laws are to blame for rent spikes, not the city ¹⁴ . Indeed, rent in Montreal rose ~120% from 2017 to 2024 ¹⁵ , outpacing other Quebec cities, which puts pressure on Rabouin to prove a third Projet Montréal mandate would yield better results ⁵ . His promises are mostly **realistic in scope** (e.g. a modest transit fare reform, using existing fines for housing, deploying photo-radar in school zones for safety), but whether they can significantly “**fix**” issues like housing affordability is debated. Critics note Projet Montréal did implement measures (inclusionary zoning, student housing projects, etc.) yet Montreal’s housing costs doubled ¹⁶ ⁵ ; Rabouin insists the city needs to continue and intensify these efforts, not abandon them.

Track Record: Rabouin is an **experienced municipal leader** with a policy-wonk background. He holds degrees in psychosociology, local economic development, and political science ¹⁷ . Before politics he worked in community economic initiatives in Montreal. As borough mayor of the Plateau-Mont-Royal, he continued his predecessor Luc Ferrandez’s legacy of traffic calming and progressive urban planning (pedestrianized streets, improved parks, etc.), albeit with a somewhat more consensus-driven style. In 2021 he was re-elected with an overwhelming 75% of the vote in his borough ¹⁸ , indicating strong local approval. Within Plante’s administration, Rabouin handled the finance and economic development dossier ¹⁹ – by all accounts, City finances remained stable under Projet Montréal (no major scandals of graft or fiscal mismanagement emerged). Montreal’s debt and taxes did rise, but largely in line with infrastructure needs and inflation, and Rabouin often emphasized efficient public spending. Notably, he championed projects to revitalize **Montréal-Est** (the east end industrial zone) by attracting sustainable industries – part of his platform now is finishing that work ²⁰ . His colleagues describe him as **pragmatic and policy-focused**. For example, while firmly committed to Projet’s environmental values, he positions himself as “*a person that is pragmatic...proposing concrete solutions that are feasible by the city*”, not just dreaming idealistically ⁷ . This pragmatism may address some voters’ fatigue with Plante’s more idealistic image. One difference in tone: Rabouin emphasizes competence and “*rigour*” in administration (likely to counter critics who say Plante’s team was sometimes improvisational). He also brings a calm demeanor, though some observers say neither he nor Ferrada have the charismatic spark of past mayors ²¹ ²² . Nonetheless, **governing experience** is Rabouin’s strength – he knows City Hall inside out and helped steer Montreal through the pandemic recovery and housing measures. He has **no known ethical scandals** in his career. (On the contrary, he has demonstrated personal integrity in small ways – e.g. disclosing that he himself is a small landlord with a longtime tenant at \$905/month, whose rent he hasn’t hiked in years ²³ ²⁴ , to show he’s sensitive to renter issues.) Rabouin also took principled stands on broader issues: for instance, in October 2025 he publicly affirmed solidarity with the Palestinian people and the **BDS movement** ²⁵ , a stance that drew both praise and criticism, but underscored his willingness to stand by his values of social justice.

Connections & Funding: Projet Montréal under Rabouin positions itself as a grassroots, citizen-driven party. It traditionally relies on small individual donations (Quebec caps municipal donations to ~\$100–\$200 per person), and its base includes urban progressives, environmental groups, and tenant advocates. There’s

no indication Rabouin has cozy ties with big developers or corporate lobbies – in fact, he often contrasts his approach with Ferrada's, saying *"I think Montrealers prefer a city that thinks about its tenants rather than a city that thinks about its developers."* ²⁶ ²⁷ . Under Plante, Projet Montréal earned a reputation for **clean governance**, especially compared to the corruption scandals of previous administrations. Rabouin's campaign funding has not raised red flags; he is supported by many community leaders and likely some labour unions (the party's platform aligns with union interests on keeping services in-house). Notably, he does **not** enjoy the backing of Montreal's traditional business elite – some of whom have thrown their support to Ferrada. As a result, Rabouin can credibly claim independence from real estate magnates or other powerful interest groups. There are **no known links to organized crime** or illicit funding in Rabouin's case. (Montreal's past mafia-linked corruption was rooted in older political machines, not Projet Montréal.) If anything, Rabouin's dual role as a **landlord and high-earner** – he earns about \$177,000 after taxes as an executive committee member ²⁸ – has been noted in media to question if he fully grasps ordinary people's struggles. He counters that he's a "small landlord, not an investor" and thus understands everyday concerns ²⁹ . Overall, Rabouin is viewed as **trustworthy and technically competent**, if a bit technocratic. He has not been personally implicated in any corruption or major controversy, which bolsters his integrity credentials. The main **integrity test** for him is whether he honestly owns up to Projet Montréal's mixed record – e.g. he tends to defend their housing efforts while acknowledging external factors ¹⁴ , which comes off as forthright but also somewhat defensive. Voters will have to judge if his promises of "going further" are genuine or simply an attempt to paper over past shortcomings.

Assessment: Luc Rabouin offers experience, continuity, and a generally clean record. His strengths are a deep knowledge of city governance and a clear commitment to **progressive policies** (climate action, tenant protections, public transit) grounded in realism. There is little doubt about his **capacity to do the job** of mayor; he has essentially been acting as Plante's second-in-command and understands the machinery of Montreal's administration. His **integrity** is reinforced by eight years of relatively scandal-free governance under Projet Montréal. The flip side is he must convince Montrealers that a *third* term of the same party will yield different results on issues like housing – i.e. that he is **genuinely willing to learn from mistakes** and push harder. So far, Rabouin has tried to distinguish himself from Mayor Plante by promising a "new approach" (more pragmatism, better communication) while *not* abandoning her vision ³⁰ . In terms of trustworthiness, he is generally seen as honest and public-service oriented; even his opponents' critiques focus more on Projet's performance than on Rabouin's character. He appears to be a **steady and competent** contender, though perhaps lacking populist flair. If elected, his record suggests he would govern with probity and a steady hand, continuing Montreal's course with incremental improvements rather than radical shifts.

Soraya Martinez Ferrada (Ensemble Montréal)



Soraya Martinez Ferrada on the campaign trail in 2025. As Ensemble Montréal's mayoral candidate, she brands herself the "housing mayor" and promises to "put Montreal back on track," while critics point to her close relations with real-estate developers. (Image: CityNews)

Party & Ideology: Soraya Martinez Ferrada leads **Ensemble Montréal**, the main opposition municipal party. Ensemble Montréal is a big-tent, centrist party that evolved from the former administration of Mayor Denis Coderre (and before that, the older Union Montréal party). In general, Ensemble positions itself as more pro-business and order-focused compared to Projet Montréal's left-leaning stance. Ferrada, a **former Liberal Member of Parliament** for Hochelaga (2019–2025) ³¹, brings a blend of community activism and establishment politics. She started her career in municipal politics: notably, she served as a Montreal city councillor for Saint-Michel from 2005 to 2009 ³² (initially under Union Montréal before switching to Vision Montréal). Thus, she has roots in the same political milieu that governed Montreal during the 2000s – an era that saw both major city-building projects and major corruption scandals (though Ferrada herself was not implicated in the latter). **Ensemble Montréal's platform**, under her leadership, emphasizes pragmatic solutions to quality-of-life issues: improving cleanliness, public safety, and municipal services, and especially tackling housing affordability with a more "pro-development" approach. Ferrada often says Montreal needs to "get back on track", implying the current administration lost focus on basics like road maintenance, garbage collection, and public security ³³ ³⁴. Her six central campaign priorities included: accelerating non-market housing, making transportation safer (with better construction coordination), cleaning up the city, strengthening public safety, reducing homelessness, and running a tighter ship at City Hall ³³ ³⁵. These priorities reflect Ensemble's more **managerial, middle-of-the-road ideology** – essentially promising competence and cleanliness rather than bold transformation. In contrast to Projet Montréal's sometimes polarizing environmental measures (e.g. removing parking for bike lanes), Ferrada's team has signaled a more car-friendly stance, vowing to review bike lanes and possibly remove those deemed to impede motorists or local business access ²² ³⁶. Ideologically, one could say Ferrada's Ensemble is **center-left on social issues but center-right on urban development**: she talks about compassion for the unhoused and the need for affordable housing, yet she is also openly supportive of working closely with private developers and landlords to achieve those goals ³⁷ ³⁸. This has raised some eyebrows among tenant rights groups (who traditionally distrust Montreal's old developer-aligned parties).

Party Record & Accomplishments: Ensemble Montréal itself (and its direct predecessors) can point to a mixed legacy. Under Mayor Coderre (2013–2017), Montreal saw big projects like the illumination of the Jacques Cartier Bridge and preparations for the city's 375th anniversary, as well as investments in public art and some economic growth. However, that era also had missteps such as the costly, short-lived Formula E race and controversies over Coderre's leadership style. Going further back, the Union Montréal era (2001–2012 under Mayor Gérald Tremblay) ended in scandal with revelations of systemic collusion in city contracts (the Charbonneau Commission on corruption) – Ensemble Montréal is essentially two generations removed from that, but some figures from that establishment are still influential. Ferrada, to her credit, left Union Montréal in 2007 when corruption whispers grew, and later joined reformist factions (Vision Montréal, then Coalition Montréal). Still, upon taking Ensemble's helm in early 2025, she inherited a party infrastructure **deeply linked to Montreal's business and political elite**. One clear metric of Ensemble's "accomplishments" in recent years is hard to find, as they've been in opposition since 2017. They have, however, effectively pressured the Plante administration on certain issues – for example, highlighting problems of city cleanliness and crime upticks, and opposing certain tax hikes. Ferrada's campaign rhetoric frequently contrasts **Projet's 8-year record** (she claims the city is dirtier, less safe, and unaffordable now) with what Ensemble would do. For instance, she argues the incumbent party "failed in its responsibilities" on building new schools and retaining families ³⁹ ⁴⁰, and promises Ensemble will show stronger leadership in collaboration with the provincial government to deliver these projects ⁴¹. In housing, Ensemble under Ferrada has set very ambitious targets – *50,000 new homes in 4 years, including 10,000 social housing units* ⁴². This far exceeds what Projet Montréal achieved (Plante's administration started or acquired a few thousand affordable units, but nowhere near that scale). However, Ferrada has sometimes appeared **unfamiliar with her own party's platform details**: in one interview, when asked about the 50,000 new homes figure (posted on Ensemble's website), she responded *"I don't even know where you got those numbers... What I announced was 2,000 transitional housing units."* ⁴². This discrepancy (between Ensemble's official plan and Ferrada's statements) drew criticism and suggests either internal misalignment or a lack of policy grasp on her part. It undercuts confidence that Ensemble's promises are fully vetted or realistic. In reality, delivering tens of thousands of units would require massive investments and provincial support – something Ferrada likely knows from her time as **Parliamentary Secretary to the federal Housing Minister (2021–2023)** ⁴³. Indeed, Ferrada has branded herself as the *"housing mayor"* and highlighted her federal experience on the housing file ⁴⁴. Ironically, a scandal emerged that dented this image: reporters found that **Ferrada had charged an illegal \$1,000 deposit to a tenant** in a rental property she owns (Quebec law forbids charging deposits for leases) ⁴⁵. She admitted the mistake – blaming a real estate agent and saying she forgot about the deposit – and reimbursed it, repeatedly calling it an *"honest mistake"* ⁴⁶. While she used the incident to illustrate how common illegal practices are in the rental market (and vowed to crack down on them) ⁴⁷, the episode was embarrassing given her former role in housing policy and raised questions about her attention to detail in her own affairs. It's an example of how **Ferrada's credibility can be challenged**: she talks passionately about fixing the housing crisis, yet had overlooked a basic Quebec rental regulation in her personal dealings ⁴⁴.

Platform Highlights vs Feasibility: Ferrada's platform strikes many of the same notes as Rabouin's – housing, homelessness, transit, public safety – but with a different emphasis. She promises to **"accelerate non-market housing"** (e.g. co-ops, social housing) by using city tools more effectively ⁴⁸, to coordinate construction better (everyone agrees on this), to clean streets and parks more frequently, and to cut red tape at City Hall ⁴⁹. One signature pledge is to *audit and possibly remove some bike lanes* to restore parking and traffic flow in spots where they believe Projet Montréal "went too far." In a debate, Ferrada even brought up a 2-year-old comment by a Projet-aligned borough mayor comparing cars to refrigerators, using it to cast Rabouin's camp as ideologically anti-car ⁵⁰ ⁵¹. To many, **rebalancing the car vs. bike**

policy is a selling point of her campaign – she has support from some drivers and merchants who feel Plante’s administration was too aggressive with street redesigns. She’s also pledged a more robust approach to public security, working closely with police to ensure “*neighbourhoods feel secure and welcoming*” ³⁴ (implicitly critiquing the current administration’s handling of issues like violent crime and downtown disorder). All these promises are **within the city’s powers** but require effective management. Ferrada portrays herself as a get-it-done manager, citing her stint as a **federal Cabinet Minister (Tourism and Economic Development for Quebec, 2023–2025)** ⁵² ⁵³ as evidence she can navigate bureaucracy and deliver. However, some observers are skeptical: Montreal’s problems like housing and homelessness depend heavily on provincial funding and policies. Indeed, Ferrada’s housing plan still assumes cooperation with Quebec – e.g. she says she *wants* a citywide rental registry (to track rents and prevent gouging), but acknowledges that would “*require participation by the provincial government.*” ⁵⁴ ⁵⁵ . Furthermore, **Ferrada has signaled she would repeal Projet Montréal’s key inclusionary zoning bylaw (20/20/20)**, arguing it drives developers away ⁵⁶ . Ensemble vowed to abolish that law “*with no replacement proposed*”, which alarms housing advocates ⁵⁶ . Ferrada’s rationale is that forcing developers to include affordable units makes them avoid building in Montreal; she prefers negotiating case by case with developers for community benefits ⁵⁷ . This stance *may* encourage more development, but without a strong replacement policy it risks favoring market-rate projects over truly affordable housing. In essence, her platform banks on **close partnership with the real estate industry** to solve the housing crisis. That leads to a key point: **Ferrada’s connections and funding.**

Funding, Backers & Potential Conflicts: Soraya Martinez Ferrada is heavily backed by Montreal’s business establishment and real-estate interests. *Multiple reports confirm this.* For example, **developer Ian Quint** (a major commercial landlord and frequent Conservative donor) hosted a cocktail fundraiser for her on a downtown rooftop, where *billionaire Stephen Bronfman* introduced Ferrada to a room of the city’s business elite ⁵⁸ . In June 2025, she was a guest at the 45th anniversary of **CORPIQ** (Quebec’s landlord lobby group) – notably, CORPIQ opposes measures like a rent registry and even advocates legalizing damage deposits (the very practice Ferrada herself mistakenly engaged in) ⁵⁹ . She maintains she still *supports* a rental registry, despite mingling with those who oppose it, insisting one can’t solve housing without working with developers and landlords ³⁷ . Indeed, when confronted about the wealthy developers supporting her, Ferrada said “*I believe it’s an error to think we can’t meet with housing developers.*” ³⁷ . Critics find this **coziness with developers** troubling. The non-profit media outlet *The Rover* investigated and found Ferrada’s past campaign financing as an MP included donations from prominent developers who have been accused of driving up rents. For instance, **Stephen Shiller**, whose firm evicted small businesses via rent hikes and flipped properties for huge profit, donated \$850 to Ferrada ⁶⁰ . Two brothers, **Labid and Majd Al Jundy**, builders of a luxury condo tower, also donated to her; one of them had publicly blasted the Plante administration for stalling a condo project near a new transit station ⁶¹ . Housing advocates like FRAPRU’s spokesperson note, “*We don’t get the impression Ms. Ferrada is truly interested in the concerns of tenants... If she is elected, will she work for those who profit from housing or for the Montreal population, mostly tenants?*” ⁶² . This succinctly captures the trust issue: Ferrada’s **funding and alliances** skew toward developers and ultra-wealthy circles, which could bias her policies. While there is **no evidence of illegal contributions or organized crime ties** in her funding (the developers named are legitimate, if sometimes controversial, businessmen – Bronfman, for instance, is known for philanthropy), the *optics* are that she is the **developers’ candidate**. This contrasts with Projet Montréal’s more arm’s-length stance toward big developers. It is worth noting that Ensemble Montréal’s history includes figures involved in corruption (e.g. ex-Union Montréal members), but Ferrada has kept such individuals at bay in her campaign. However, one *Ensemble star candidate* did raise ethical concerns: **Leslie Roberts**, a former TV news anchor running for Ensemble, had resigned from Global Toronto in 2015 over a conflict-of-interest scandal (he secretly co-

owned a PR firm while reporting) ⁶³ . Rabouin publicly blasted Ferrada for recruiting someone with that ethics baggage ⁶³ . Ferrada defended Roberts, and he remained on her slate. More seriously, **Ferrada faced internal controversies with candidates making offensive posts**. She initially stood by *Alexandre Giasson*, her candidate in Hochelaga, despite social media posts in which he insulted public figures (e.g. celebrating the death of a respected journalist, and disparaging election officials and opponents). After media revelations and public pressure, Ferrada eventually **dropped Giasson from the team** in mid-October, saying she did so once “new information” came to light ⁶⁴ . Another candidate, **Thierry Daraize** (running for Sud-Ouest borough mayor under Ensemble), was found to have made Islamophobic and grossly insensitive comments online (referring to Muslims as “bearded radicals”, joking about vacationing in Gaza after bombing, etc.) ⁶⁵ . This came out during the campaign; initially Ensemble stayed silent, then issued support for him after he apologized and claimed his tone was “sarcastic” and misunderstood ⁶⁶ . Ferrada’s handling of these issues was seen as **hesitant and reactive**, raising questions about her judgment in vetting candidates and willingness to act decisively against misconduct. While these incidents don’t implicate Ferrada in wrongdoing, they test her **leadership integrity** – voters saw her at first *defending* problematic loyalists, then backtracking under media scrutiny. A leader’s responsiveness to ethical problems is an important trust factor. Ferrada likely learned some lessons and has since emphasized that she won’t tolerate intolerance, but the delays gave opponents ammunition to question her management.

Integrity & Trustworthiness: Soraya Martinez Ferrada comes across as a **dynamic and ambitious politician**, but one whose alliances and occasional missteps invite scrutiny. On the positive side, she has a compelling personal story (Chilean-born immigrant who fled dictatorship as a child, made a life in Montreal, started as a grassroots organizer in St-Michel). She clearly cares about issues like housing – she was *literally* the federal **Minister of Tourism and regional Economic Development** up until February 2025 ⁵² , and before that was heavily involved in housing policy at the federal level ⁴³ . Her experience at higher levels of government could be beneficial: for example, having Ottawa connections might help Montreal secure funding for housing and transit. She’s also perceived as **charismatic and bilingual**, able to reach both francophone and anglophone communities. However, **trustworthiness** is an area where she’s still earning her stripes. The *illegal deposit* incident, though minor in money, was a blow to her credibility as a “housing champion” ⁴⁶ . It suggested either negligence or ignorance of provincial law (neither trait is good for someone aspiring to run the city). Ferrada’s prompt admission and correction of the mistake ⁴⁶ was the right move, but detractors won’t let it go easily. More broadly, her proposed rollback of inclusionary housing requirements and her reliance on developer friendships suggest a risk that she might **prioritize developers’ interests over ordinary citizens’** if a conflict arises. *For example*, Ferrada has said the 20/20/20 affordable housing bylaw would push builders to the suburbs ⁵⁶ , so she’d scrap it – essentially siding with developers who dislike the regulation, even though it was intended to ensure affordability in new projects. Without a clear alternative plan, this stance could undermine affordable housing goals, benefiting real estate profit more than tenants. Such positions feed a narrative (pushed by Projet Montréal) that Ferrada is **“opportunistic”** in seizing the housing issue but may not deliver for tenants ⁶⁷ . Ferrada counters that she’ll produce results through pragmatism and partnerships. Ultimately, evaluating her integrity may come down to **whether one believes she can work with powerful interests without being captured by them**. Her campaign endorsements by prominent figures like former Liberal Finance Minister Raymond Bachand and other business leaders show she has establishment confidence ⁶⁸ . That can be double-edged: it suggests she could navigate bureaucracy well, but also that she might revert to the old status quo way of doing things at City Hall, which some Montrealers distrust. In summary, **Soraya Martinez Ferrada is capable and driven**, but to many progressives she appears *too cozy with the “big money” crowd*. Conversely, to more conservative voters, her long Liberal pedigree might signal reliability and moderation. She has **no personal scandals of corruption**; her pitfalls so far have been more about **political judgment** (e.g.

candidate vetting, inconsistent messaging on platform numbers). If elected, her success would depend on balancing her developer-friendly approach with the urgent needs of renters and neighborhoods. Given her network and assertiveness, she likely *does* have the **capacity to do the job** – she’s managed significant portfolios in government – but Montreal’s mayor must also unite diverse communities. Whether Ferrada can maintain the public’s trust while being closely aligned with developers will be a major test of her leadership.

Craig Sauvé (Transition Montréal)

Craig Sauvé, leader of the new party Transition Montréal, during the 2025 campaign. A 12-year city councillor known for progressive activism, Sauvé promises “politics done differently” – including taxing luxury properties, electoral reform, and greater transparency. (Image: CultMTL)

Party & Background: Craig Sauvé broke away to form **Transition Montréal** in mid-2025 ⁶⁹, aiming to offer an alternative to the two main parties. Transition Montréal is a **brand-new progressive party** with an emphasis on democratic reform, social justice, and “unity through ideas” rather than divisive partisanship ⁷⁰ ⁷¹. Sauvé himself is a seasoned Montreal City Councillor: he’s represented a Sud-Ouest district (Saint-Henri-Little Burgundy–Point St-Charles–Griffintown) since 2013 ⁷². Initially elected with Projet Montréal, Sauvé was known as a left-wing firebrand – he served as Projet’s opposition critic for transport, where he advocated for more active transit infrastructure, better funding for the STM (transit authority), and opposed highway expansions ⁷³. He also took stands on civil liberties, opposing the controversial P-6 bylaw that restricted protestors (a bylaw from the previous administration) ⁷³. In government (2017–2021, when Projet Montréal took power), Sauvé continued championing environmental and social causes. He was vice-chair of the STM board, helping oversee public transit, and held an associate role on the executive committee, though not a high-profile cabinet post ⁷⁴.

However, right before the 2021 election, Sauvé’s trajectory took a turn due to a **personal controversy**: an allegation of sexual assault from 2012 surfaced. Sauvé **withdrew from Projet Montréal’s caucus** days before the 2021 vote, maintaining the accusation was “*unfounded*” ⁷⁵. (No charges were filed; the details were never fully public, but media reported that Mayor Plante’s office had been informed of a historical allegation involving Sauvé, which Sauvé vehemently denied ⁷⁶.) He ran as an independent in 2021 and still won re-election, suggesting his constituents gave him the benefit of the doubt ⁷⁷. An independent investigation later found no basis to proceed against him, and Sauvé gradually resumed public duties, though he was politically estranged from Projet Montréal. In 2024, he even attempted to enter federal politics under the NDP, running in a by-election and the 2025 federal election (unsuccessfully) ⁷⁸. By July 2025, he returned full force to municipal politics by launching Transition Montréal and his mayoral candidacy ⁷⁹.

Platform & Ideas: Sauvé’s platform is arguably the **boldest** of the three in terms of institutional change and new ideas. He emphasizes **fairness, transparency, and empowering citizens** ⁸⁰. Some standout promises of Transition Montréal include:

- **Electoral Reform:** introducing a preferential ballot for mayoral elections and proportional representation for the city council ⁸¹. He also calls for the direct election of the Ville-Marie (downtown) borough mayor (currently, Montreal’s mayor automatically serves as Ville-Marie mayor) ⁸². These changes aim to make the city’s democracy more representative and less dominated by

two parties. (Implementing PR would likely require provincial approval, but Sauvé is pushing it into the conversation.)

- **Taxing the Ultra-Rich:** a “luxury property tax” – a progressive surtax on high-value residential properties (e.g. a 25% higher rate on homes over \$3.5 million, and 33% extra on those over \$5 million) ⁸³ ⁸⁴ . All revenue from this would be funneled into housing and homelessness solutions ⁸³ . Sauvé argues this is a fair way to redistribute wealth at the municipal level and tackle inequality, noting that the super-rich can’t hide their real estate offshore ⁸⁴ ⁸⁵ . This idea is novel for Montreal – it would target mansions and luxury condos, likely affecting only a tiny fraction of properties, but could set a precedent in Canada if enacted.
- **Housing & Homelessness:** Sauvé pledges to **ban illegal short-term rentals** like Airbnb citywide to free up housing ⁸⁶ (Montreal has already cracked down, but he’d go further). More significantly, he proposes creating a **municipal housing development agency** – essentially a public builder – to construct non-market housing *faster and more efficiently* ⁸⁶ . This acknowledges a frustration with relying on private developers or slow provincial programs; Sauvé wants the city to take a direct role in building affordable units. He also talks about a “social emergency service” to respond to mental health and homelessness crises (instead of just police) ⁸⁷ – a shift toward prevention and care in public safety.
- **Public Services & Infrastructure:** A concept he calls “**Infra-MTL**” – a dedicated municipal works unit to handle infrastructure like paving roads, fixing sidewalks, adding speed bumps and bike lanes in-house ⁸⁸ . Sauvé has observed that when city blue-collar crews did such projects in his borough, it cost *66% less* than contracting out to private firms ⁸⁹ . By expanding in-house work, he aims to save money and reduce delays (and perhaps curb opportunities for collusion that plagued Montreal in the past). This aligns with his stance against austerity – “*the winds of austerity are blowing,*” he says, so the city must innovate to cut costs without cutting services ⁸⁹ ⁹⁰ .
- **Quality of Life and Culture:** He uniquely proposes appointing a “**night mayor**” and establishing a Nightlife Office to protect and promote Montreal’s vibrant night culture ⁸⁸ . This includes helping music venues with soundproofing and streamlining bar regulations. It’s a policy borrowed from some European cities and reflects Sauvé’s connection to the arts (he’s a musician himself). Additionally, he wants community-owned grocery markets in “food deserts” to ensure food affordability ⁹¹ .

Overall, Transition Montréal’s platform is comprehensive and **quite progressive**. Many of Sauvé’s ideas are *innovative but untested* in Montreal. Implementing them would require significant political will and, in cases like electoral reform, cooperation beyond city hall (from Quebec’s government). Sauvé acknowledges that some proposals, like major housing builds, need provincial/federal partnership – but he frames his campaign as one of “**courage to dream of Montreal differently**” ⁷⁰ . Importantly, Sauvé emphasizes running a *positive, issues-focused campaign*, explicitly saying he doesn’t want to bash his opponents but rather elevate new ideas ⁹² . Indeed, observers noted that Transition Montréal conducted a “campaign of ideas, not attacks,” in contrast to the mudslinging between the other two camps ⁷⁰ . This approach has bolstered Sauvé’s personal integrity image during the race.

Track Record & Experience: Among the three candidates, **Craig Sauvé has the longest continuous experience on City Council (12 years)** ⁹³ ⁹⁴ . By his own argument, he has “held a number of files for the

city” and “*has insights*” others lack ⁹² . It’s true that he’s been deeply involved at the borough level in Sud-Ouest, which underwent significant changes (redevelopment of Griffintown, mobility projects, etc.) in the past decade. He’s known as a **grassroots politician**, often attending community meetings, cycling around his district, and engaging with residents. His activism background (protesting pipelines, advocating for affordable housing in new condo projects, etc.) shows he has long-standing convictions. One could say **Sauvé’s track record is one of a principled agitator within the system**. As part of Projet Montréal pre-2017, he fought the then-administration’s policies he disagreed with and helped push Plante’s more progressive agenda. For instance, he was an early advocate for allowing pit bulls when Coderre’s admin had banned them, and for expanding compost pickup and other green initiatives. In Plante’s administration, he did not have a high-profile executive portfolio (perhaps due to the pending allegation situation), but he remained an influential voice on transit and social policy. After becoming independent, he still collaborated on certain council motions aligned with his values.

A major blemish on Sauvé’s record is the **2012 sexual misconduct allegation**. This is sensitive: the woman’s allegation never went to court, and Sauvé was not charged. He and those close to him labeled it a smear. An independent “*Police Ethics Commissioner*” inquiry (because the allegation involved an off-duty special constable, not directly Sauvé’s actions during his public duties) did not result in public findings against him. Given the lack of formal proceedings and Sauvé’s consistent denial, many supporters accepted his innocence. However, for voters concerned with character, the story could raise doubts. It is likely some asked him directly about it – in fact, in a Reddit AMA, someone bluntly questioned why voters should choose a candidate “with allegations of sexual assault...over those without accusations” ⁹⁵ . Sauvé’s response has been to emphasize the allegation was unfounded and that he stepped away from his party at the time to avoid it harming the movement ⁷⁵ ⁷⁶ . He appears to have since regained the trust of many colleagues; notably, in this election he attracted a slate of Transition Montréal council candidates, including community figures, which suggests the issue did not make him a pariah in progressive circles. In evaluating his **integrity**, one must weigh that unresolved incident against a long career otherwise unmarred by corruption or malfeasance. Sauvé has never been accused of financial impropriety or abuse of office. If anything, he’s known for personal frugality (biking to work, etc.) and honesty. His campaign financing likely came from small donors, possibly some support from left-leaning unions or NGOs, but we haven’t seen reports of big corporate money backing him – he proudly states Transition is “*independent of lobby groups*” and built on grassroots support ⁷¹ . In the final days of the campaign, Sauvé highlighted that unlike his rivals he is “**not beholden to big donors**”, which is largely credible.

Public Perception & Capacity: Craig Sauvé is often described as **passionate, creative, and combative in council debates** (he’s not afraid to call out what he sees as injustice). As a trained **heavy metal musician** and a younger politician (44) ⁹⁶ ⁹⁷ , he brings a different vibe – informal, perhaps more in touch with youth and subcultures. Supporters see him as *genuine* and principled; even opponents would concede he believes in his cause. The question is whether he has the **temperament and skills to lead the entire city**. Running a city of 2 million is different from advocating as a councilor. In debates, Sauvé sometimes lacked the polish of Ferrada or the calm of Rabouin, but he injected ideas that forced the others to respond (e.g. neither of the other two were keen to discuss electoral reform until Sauvé put it on the agenda). His chances of winning were always slim – polls put him well behind – yet he used his platform to influence the discourse. For instance, after Sauvé proposed taxing luxury homes, even Ensemble’s Ferrada acknowledged the ultra-rich should contribute more (though she favored doing that via higher provincial taxes, not a city tax). This suggests Sauvé has been effective as a **policy driver**. If he were to become mayor (hypothetically), there would be the challenge of having a fledgling party behind him. Transition Montréal ran candidates in most districts but would likely not win many seats; a Mayor Sauvé could face a hostile council dominated by

Projet and Ensemble. That could hamper implementing his agenda. That said, his personal **capacity** shouldn't be underestimated: he has chaired council committees before, and as he points out, he has more council experience than either Rabouin or Ferrada ⁹² . He also has been on the **executive of the Montreal Metropolitan Community** (the regional planning body) and has negotiated with other levels of government in roles like STM board vice-chair. This indicates he knows bureaucratic processes and how to collaborate or push when needed. The main unknown is how well he'd transition from being a sometimes-fiercy advocate to being a consensus-building executive leader. His campaign tone – focusing on hope and unity – was an attempt to show he can bring people together around ideas ⁹⁸ ⁹⁹ .

Integrity & Trust: Taking all into account, **Craig Sauvé** appears to be a **high-integrity candidate in terms of honesty and dedication to the public good**. He is the only one of the three who has explicitly centered **transparency and anti-corruption** in his platform (proportional representation, in-house infrastructure work to curb collusion, etc., are structural integrity measures). Unlike Ferrada, he's not meeting behind closed doors with billionaire donors; unlike Rabouin, he's not defending an 8-year record that some find disappointing. Instead, he's offering a critique of the whole system. Sauvé's **biggest integrity challenge** is the lingering cloud of that past allegation – a matter separate from governance but relevant to personal trust. Voters who prioritize social issues may weigh that heavily. However, given the lack of evidence and his otherwise clean slate, many might forgive or set aside that incident, especially since Sauvé has been transparent about it and there's been no recurrence or pattern of misconduct reported. Notably, Sauvé's campaign was *lauded* for its positivity and **refusal to engage in personal attacks** ⁷⁰ . He kept his focus on issues like housing and inequality, which can be seen as a mark of character in the often nasty arena of politics.

In terms of **connections**, Sauvé is largely connected to progressive activists, community organizers, and average constituents. There is no sign of him courting developers or being involved with any shady groups. (He was a member of Projet Montréal, which itself emerged as a reform party against the corrupt old guard.) After splitting off, he still carried that reformist torch. **Organized crime ties:** none known or even speculated – Sauvé's profile is that of a social justice advocate, not someone fraternizing with construction magnates or contractors of ill repute. Indeed, his push for public works by city employees is partly to reduce reliance on private contractors, a sector that historically had mafia infiltration; this suggests he's actively trying to *insulate* city projects from organized crime influences.

Assessment: **Craig Sauvé** offers Montrealers a vision of change that is arguably the most **idealistic and citizen-centered** of the three. He scores high on **genuineness** – he comes across as someone who truly wants to make politics more ethical and inclusive. His **trustworthiness** in handling city affairs is bolstered by a lack of corruption in his past and a campaign financed by regular people, but it is shadowed slightly by that single (disputed) personal incident. On pure governance grounds, Sauvé has ample city hall experience, yet he has not held top leadership roles, so there's some uncertainty how he'd perform as mayor. His temperament is collaborative but also passionate, which can be a double-edged sword. If one values **integrity, fresh ideas, and independence from powerful lobbies**, Sauvé stands out positively – he even explicitly said *"Transition sets itself apart by being independent of lobby groups"* ⁷¹ . If one is more concerned with proven management and stability, Sauvé might seem a risk due to his outsider status and ambitious reforms.

In conclusion, **Craig Sauvé** represents the **principled outsider/insider** – he knows the system well, has fought for change from within, and now from outside, and stakes his integrity on doing politics differently.

He has shown **courage in campaigning on issues** like taxing the rich and changing the voting system, which speaks to an authenticity and long-term vision for improving trust in local government.

Comparative Evaluation: Integrity, Trustworthiness & Capacity

All three candidates bring different strengths and potential red flags when it comes to integrity and their ability to lead Montreal effectively. Here's a comparative wrap-up:

- **Political Integrity & Scandals:** None of the three has been implicated in financial corruption or criminal wrongdoing. Montreal's bad old days of brown envelopes largely predates them. **Luc Rabouin** arguably has the cleanest slate – eight years in power with Projet Montréal saw **no major corruption scandals**, and Rabouin himself hasn't been touched by any personal controversy. He has a reputation for honesty and technocratic competence. **Soraya Martinez Ferrada** has no corruption either, but some *ethical lapses in judgment* have emerged (her “honest mistake” violating a housing law ⁴⁶, and her initial defense of questionable candidates). These incidents, while relatively minor, might chip away at trust, as they suggest lapses in oversight. Additionally, Ferrada's *very close ties to developers and wealthy donors* ¹⁰⁰ ⁶⁰ raise ethical concerns about **undue influence** – will she prioritize public interest when it conflicts with those of her influential backers? **Craig Sauv ** has a big blemish in the form of the past allegation of sexual assault (which he denies and which did not result in formal charges) ⁷⁵. This is a different kind of integrity question – more about personal conduct than public corruption. Voters will have to judge how much weight to give it. Importantly, on public integrity issues (transparency, anti-corruption), Sauv  scores very high: he has been a consistent advocate for **clean governance** (e.g. public control of projects to avoid collusion ⁸⁹, proportional representation to eliminate gerrymandering), and he takes pride in not catering to special interest lobbies ⁷¹. In that sense, **Sauv  is perhaps the most independent** of the three, Ferrada the least (given Ensemble's establishment ties), with Rabouin in between (Projet Montr al is relatively independent but after 8 years in power, they have their own network of allies and have accepted some compromises with developers too, albeit not to Ensemble's extent).
- **Trustworthiness & Transparency:** **Rabouin** is seen as steady and earnest – he comes across as a somewhat wonky, no-nonsense administrator who doesn't sugarcoat the challenges (for instance, he candidly admitted the housing bylaw hasn't worked as hoped ¹⁰). His communication style is not flashy, but that in itself can build trust through perceived candor and humility. **Ferrada** is charismatic and articulate, but her slip (not knowing her platform's housing numbers ⁴²) and her broad promises could make skeptics wonder if she's over-promising or not fully transparent about what she can achieve. There's a sense that she might say different things to different audiences – e.g., courting tenant groups with pledges of housing, while reassuring developers in private that regulations will be loosened. She'll need to prove that her “*putting Montreal back on track*” slogan isn't just rhetoric and that she won't revert to old patronage habits. **Sauv ** is very transparent about his agenda – perhaps the most specific and ideology-driven (in a clear, openly stated way) of the three. He answers policy questions directly and publishes detailed ideas. His sincerity is a strong point; even if one disagrees with him, one generally knows where he stands, which is a key aspect of trust. On a personal level, Sauv 's dispute with an accuser is a complicating factor – trust in him may vary depending on whether one believes his account of that incident or not. All told, if “trustworthiness” means *likely to do what they say and prioritize the public good*, one could argue **Rabouin and Sauv  rate higher** (Rabouin due to proven consistency in office; Sauv  due to ideological commitment and no powerful puppeteers behind him) whereas **Ferrada has to overcome doubts** (not because she's

unprincipled per se, but because she is balancing populist promises with insider alliances that could conflict with those promises).

- **Competence & Capacity:** **Rabouin** clearly has the direct relevant experience – running a borough, managing city finances, leading the majority party – which suggests he can step into the mayor’s role smoothly. His capacity is proven in many respects, though some criticize Projet Montréal’s management of things like roadwork and communications. If one was content with how the city was run under Plante, Rabouin represents continuity with hopefully some improvements in execution. **Ferrada** has high-level leadership experience (as a federal minister and as Ensemble’s leader) and knows municipal politics (a former councillor). She likely has strong political instincts and can navigate bureaucracy, especially leveraging her contacts in Quebec City and Ottawa. There might be a learning curve on the specifics of municipal administration after years in federal politics, but her supporters would argue she has a broader vision and decisiveness. She’s positioning as a **“fresh start”** for City Hall, which may energize civil servants or could cause upheaval – it’s hard to know. **Sauvé** has intimate knowledge of city issues and a lot of ideas for reform, but as a new party leader he’d have to assemble a competent team to govern. His capacity isn’t unproven, but it’s less tested at the executive level. Some might fear a Transition Montréal administration could struggle to get things done if most councilors belong to other parties (scenario: Mayor Sauvé with a council controlled by Ensemble or Projet would be tricky). That said, Sauvé’s long tenure and collaborative work suggest he could find common ground; he’s not an extremist by any means, he’s more of a **progressive pragmatist** with big goals.

- **Connections & Accountability:** In terms of who they are **accountable to:** **Rabouin** is accountable to the Projet Montréal base – citizens who demand green, social policies – and he has a party apparatus that emphasizes ethics (Projet adopted stricter fundraising rules on itself and prides itself on post-Charbonneau ethical standards). There have been no whispers of organized crime infiltration in Projet Montréal under Plante/Rabouin. **Ferrada** is clearly networking with business and real estate power brokers ⁵⁸. That can be double-edged: it could mean a more investment-friendly city (some believe working with developers is necessary to build housing quickly), but it also raises the specter of Montreal’s past collusion problems. Ferrada will have to ensure *extreme transparency* in any dealings with developers (e.g. contracts, tenders, partnerships) to avoid a return to old habits. **Sauvé** is accountable to activists and ordinary residents first and foremost. If he won, his administration’s challenge would likely be more about proving competence rather than fending off corruption; his network isn’t the typical one where corruption breeds. His promise to remove lobby influence is credible – he even voluntarily **disclosed his own assets** (small duplex ownership) and perspectives in interviews to show he has nothing to hide ²³.

- **Organized Crime Connections:** It bears repeating that **none of the three has any known connection to organized crime**. That issue, which plagued City Hall in the 2000s, is less overt now. If one were exceedingly cautious, one might note that Ensemble Montréal (Ferrada’s party) includes some old political figures from the era when the Italian mafia and construction cartels had influence – but Ferrada herself is new blood in that structure and has promised to be ethical. Projet Montréal (Rabouin) came to power on an anti-corruption wave and implemented reforms like open data for city contracts, so it’s considered low-risk for mafia ties. Transition Montréal (Sauvé) is brand new and built explicitly to challenge status-quo power structures, so it’s also unlikely to have any such issues. In fact, Sauvé’s push for in-house infrastructure work is a pointed measure to *keep the mafia at bay*, given the history of private construction collusion ⁸⁹. So on the organized crime front, all three

seem **clean**, with Sauvé and Rabouin perhaps the least likely to ever tolerate such influences, and Ferrada needing to be careful given some of her allies (e.g., if any Ensemble candidates or fundraisers had past shady links – none have been reported during the campaign, but vigilance is key).

Final thoughts:

- **Luc Rabouin** comes off as a **competent, ethical administrator** whose main challenge is convincing voters that *continuity won't mean complacency*. His integrity is solid, with virtually no question marks, and he has a proven capacity to govern. The question is more whether his party's actual accomplishments (and failures) align with his platform promises, and whether he can inject urgency into addressing Montreal's crises given that the Projet approach thus far has had mixed results. If integrity means *keeping promises*, one might watch whether Rabouin acknowledges past shortfalls and adjusts – there are signs he will (e.g., tightening the housing bylaw enforcement ¹¹).
- **Soraya Martinez Ferrada** is a **dynamic leader** who could potentially bridge Montreal with higher levels of government, and she emphasizes core issues Montrealers care about (safety, cleanliness, housing). Her **integrity and trust** will hinge on whether she truly works *for the average Montrealer* or ends up catering to the powerful interests backing her. She has the *will and skill* to run the city, but must prove that her campaign moniker of “*housing mayor*” isn't at odds with her developer-friendly approach. Voters who are weary of Projet Montréal's style but also remember the old corruption days might be on the fence about her – she will have to demonstrate a **new Ensemble Montréal** that is transparent and citizen-focused.
- **Craig Sauvé** is the **idealist with experience**, offering a break from the status quo with systemic changes. His **genuine commitment** to inclusivity and fairness is a strong point, and he has a track record of standing up for what he believes. The main risks with him are not ethical but practical: can he actually implement his ambitious agenda, and can he move beyond being a crusader to being a consensus-builder? Trust in Sauvé involves trusting that “*politics differently*” can work – some voters might love that notion, others might be skeptical. However, given that he ran a **positive campaign focused on issues** ⁷⁰ and refused to engage in smear tactics, he earned respect for integrity even from some who might not vote for him.

In summary, Montreal has a choice between:

- a **steady, proven (if somewhat status-quo)** manager in Rabouin, whose integrity is well-established;
- a **bold, change-oriented yet establishment-backed** contender in Ferrada, who has passion and clout but must allay concerns about her allies and consistency;
- and a **visionary reformer** in Sauvé, whose ethical compass is strong but who represents a leap of faith in terms of governing feasibility.

Each has demonstrated capacity in different arenas – Rabouin in municipal governance, Ferrada in higher political leadership, and Sauvé in grassroots policymaking – and each will be judged on whether their past aligns with their present promises. Montrealers will need to weigh who they believe is **most honest, most aligned with public interest, and most capable of delivering on their platform without compromising core values**.

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